

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 SR-02 ORM-03 SAM-01 SAJ-01 CU-04

NSCE-00 DRC-01 /140 W

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R 190804Z JUN 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1181

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 6952

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CH HK VN

SUBJ: HONG KONG GOVERNMENT DEPORTATION OF ETHNIC CHINESE RESIDENTS
IN SOUTH VIETNAM

SUMMARY : THE DEPORTATION BACK TO SAIGON BY HONG KONG
GOVERNMENT (HKG) AUTHORITIES OF 118 ETHNIC CHINESE SOUTH
VIETNAMESE RESIDENTS APPREHENDED WHILE TRYING TO ILLEGALLY
ENTER HONG KONG HAS REVEALED CLEARLY PEKING'S RELUCTANCE TO GET
INVOLVED IN SUCH OVERSEAS CHINESE MATTERS. THE CASE ALSO POINTED
UP CONTINUING HKG CONCERN ABOUT THE VULNERABILITY OF
THE COLONY TO FURTHER CHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

1. HONG KONG POLICE ON JUNE 2 APPREHENDED A LOCAL FISHING
VESSEL WITH 119 ETHNIC CHINESE SOUTH VIETNAMESE RESIDENTS
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ABOARD AS THEY TRIED TO MAKE ILLEGAL ENTRY. GROUP HAD BEEN EARLIER

OFF-LOADED FROM A FREIGHTER AND THERE WERE OTHER CLEAR SIGNS OF AN ORGANIZED SMUGGLING SYNDICATE INVOLVEMENT. SVN AUTHORITIES REQUESTED HKG RETURN OF THE GROUP TO SAIGON ON GROUNDS THAT (1) GREAT MAJORITY (MORE THAN 90 BEING OF MILITARY SERVICE AGE) WERE DRAFT DODGERS AND (2) SOME COULD BE SMUGGLING SYNDICATE OPERATIVES PLYING BETWEEN HONG KONG -SVN OR AT LEAST COULD PROVIDE EVIDENCE FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION. (ACCORDING GVN CONGEN SOURCES, THE POSSIBILITY THAT AS MANY AS 1700 SVN RESIDENTS MAY HAVE BEEN SMUGGLED INTO HONG KONG IN RECENT YEARS AND THAT GVN MILITARY MAY BE INVOLVED ADDED IMPETUS TO THE EXTRADITION REQUEST).

2. ON OTHER HAND HONG KONG RELATIVES OF THE 119 QUICKLY MOUNTED A WELL PUBLICIZED EFFORT TO HAVE THE HKG GRANT AT LEAST TEMPORARY ASYLUM, PENDING THEIR POSSIBLE IMMIGRATION TO THIRD COUNTRIES. THE RELATIVES CLAIMED THAT IF RETURNED THE GROUP FACED SVN PERSECUTION, IMPRISONMENT AND WORSE. SEVERAL HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING AMMESTY INTERNATIONAL, WERE APPROACHED AND THESE RESPONDED IN VARYING DEGREES. POSSIBLE THIRD COUNTRIES ASYLUM MENTIONED AUSTRALIA, HOLLAND AND FRANCE (NO FORMAL INVOLVEMENT OF U.S. WAS BROUGHT INTO CASE). RELATIVES ON JUN 7 ALSO PRESENTED A PETITION TO LOCAL PRC REPRESENTATIVES AT THE NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY (NCNA) OFFICE ON GROUNDS THAT THE GROUP WERE OVERSEAS CHINESE. PRC REPS, HOWEVER, TOOK NO PUBLIC ACTION AND THE VERY FACT THAT THE PETITION HAD BEEN SUBMITTED WAS OMITTED FROM PRC-OWNED NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF THE CASE AT THE TIME.

3. UNDER THESE DELICATE CIRCUMSTANCES HKG AUTHORITIES REFERRED THE MATTER TO LONDON FOR DECISION. WHILE HKG WAS NOT UNMINDFUL OF HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS, IT ALSO HAD STRONG OPPOSING CONCERNS. THE CHIEF CONCERN WAS THAT GRANTING SYLUM MIGHT ESTABLISH A PRECEDENT WHICH WOULD ENCOURAGE OTHER OVERSEAS CHINESE IN THE REGION TO SEEK REFUGE IN HONG KONG (GVN CONGEN TOLD U.S. CONGENOFF THAT IN REQUESTING DEPARTATION HE HAD STRONGLY STRESSED THIS ASPECT.) THE VIEW THAT HONG KONG ALREADY HAS ITS HANDS FULL WITH PRESENT OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS, DEPRESSED ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, AND THE RECENT LARGE IMMIGRATION INFLUX FROM CHINA IS WIDESPREAD IN THE COLONY. THUS HKG
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AUTHORITIES MADE INCREASINGLY STRONG PUBLIC INDICATIONS THAT THE GROUP PROBABLY WOULD
BE SENT BACK TO SVN.

4. MEANWHILE, THE PLIGHT OF GROUP RECEIVED CONSIDRABLE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY. (HANOI'S NHAN DAN JUNE 15 FOR EXAMPLE CHARGED "HONG KONG-SAIGON COLLUSION "IN PERSECUTING THE DRAFT DODGERS AND ATTACKED HONG KONG EXTRADITION PLANS IN

CONCERT WITH LASHING OUT AT THE THIEU GOVERNMENT.
SIGNIFICANTLY NHAN DAN MADE NO MENTION THAT THE GROUP INVOLVED ETHNIC CHINESE.) PUBLIC REACTION IN HONG KONG, WHILE ENCOURAGING SOME EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY FOR THE GROUP, GENERALLY LINED UP BEHIND THE HKG POSITION THAT THE COLONY WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO ACCOMMODATE THIS AND OTHER REFUGEE GROUPS. PUBLICITY THAT GVN AUTHORITIES HAD "GIVEN ASSURANCES" THAT IF THE GROUP WERE RETURNED TO SAIGON AND WERE FOUND INNOCENT OF SERIOUS CRIME THEY FACED NEITHER HARSH NOR UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT FURTHER DISSIPATED PUBLIC CONCERN.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 HONG KONG 6952

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5. IN A QUICK MOVE HKG AUTHORITIES ON JUNE 17 IN THE EARLY HOURS WHEN THE AIRPORT WAS EMPTY CARRIED OUT THE DEPORTATION OF 118 PERSONS (ONE MAN WITH CLAIM TO HONG KONG RESIDENCY WAS EXEMPTED). DESPITE EFFORTS OF ABOUT 100 RELATIVES TO STOP THE PROCEEDINGS (INCLUDING CHARGING AT POLICE LINES, BANGING

ON THE DEPARTING AIRCRAFT AND ATTEMPTING TO ENTER RESTRICTED AREA), THE DEPORTATION WAS EFFECTED WITHOUT MAJOR INCIDENT. AFTERMATH REACTION HAS INCLUDED SOME MINOR CRITICISM OF THE PREEMPTIVE MANNER THE DEPORTATION WAS CARRIED OUT AND SOME MINOR DEMONSTRATIONS BY LEFTIST STUDENT GROUP TO HAVE THE 118 BROUGHT BACK TO HONG KONG. PRESS REACTION HAS BEEN GENERALLY CONFINED TO EXPRESSIONS OF REGRET THIS ACTION WAS NECESSARY. THE REACTION OF PRC-OWNED NEWSPAPERS AFTER THE GROUP HAS ALREADY LEFT WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING. BOTH MAJOR PRC PAPERS BELATEDLY REPORTED NCNA RECEIPT OF THE JUNE 7 PETITION AS WELL
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AS ANOTHER JUNE 17 SUBMISSION WITH BOTH PAPERS MERELY NOTING THAT NCNA REPRESENTATIVES HAD ACCEPTED THE PETITIONS. WEN WEI PAO IN REPORTING THE DEPORTATION ADDED THAT THE REFUGEES HAD "SNEAKED" INTO HONG KONG IN ORDER TO ESCAPE MILITARY SERVICE.

6. ASIDE FROM POSSIBLE RAMIFICATIONS THE CASE MAY HAVE ON SVN-HONG KONG SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES, THE INCIDENT POINTED UP CLEAR RELUCTANCE OF LOCAL PEKING CADRES TO BECOME INVOLVED IN AN OVERSEAS CHINESE MATTER. THIS WAS INDICATED BY THE LACK OF ANY ORGANIZED PRC ACTIVITY DURING THE PERIOD WHEN THE GROUP WAS IN HONG KONG AND IN THE SELECTED REPORTING PRC OWNED PAPERS GAVE TO THE INCIDENT. THIS ACTION IS CONSISTANT WITH RECENT PRC EFFORTS TO DOWNGRADE OVERSEAS CHINESE ISSUES AS PART OF PEKING'S DETENTE WITH SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES AND WITH THE CURRENT CORDIAL PRC -HONG KONG RELATIONS. INCIDENT ALSO POINTED UP CONTINUING CONCERN OF HKG ABOUT VULNERABILITY OF THE COLONY TO FURTHER CHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEMS. (FURTHER DETAILS FOLLOW BY AIRGRAM).
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